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# What meets the eye

*The key components  
of stunning visuals*

## Before

Industrial Brand partner and design director Mark Busse will divulge his secrets for stunning visuals, he wants to make one thing perfectly clear: neither he nor his colleagues are graphic designers.

"Making pretty pictures and posters is just one thing we do," says Busse. "There's much more to it than that. The industry has changed. The role has changed. We're visual communicators, and we're in the business of producing results for business."

His point: beautiful artwork is just one factor among many that make design strategic and effective on everything from magazine spreads to billboards.

Achim Klor, president and creative director of SterlingKlor Communications, echoes Busse's sentiment: "New clients often want to jump right into the creative because they've got cool ideas and want to get their message out to market fast. But that's like trying to build a house without a blueprint. You need that insight and strategy to be in place before you can start working the design."

Here are the must-haves.

### Audience

To Busse, the "absolute key factor in the whole equation" is that the needs and preferences of the audience must guide every choice.

"Something may be beautiful, but if it's impossible to make out [whom] it's for or what the message is, it's useless as a communication piece," he insists. Because images can reveal so much more than words (show, don't tell), successful marketing visuals grab the attention of and say something to the intended audience.

"You need to know [whom] you're designing for," Klor confirms. "Creative design is not art; it's all about communication. If it doesn't communicate the message effectively, you may as well hang it in the Vancouver Art Gallery and let people look at it that way."

### Clarity

For Klor, less is more. Often, "the most basic designs communicate best."

Says Busse, "Simplicity, striking or unconventional imagery, accessible copy with meaning, fast readability and decoding, bright colours, white space and contrast to break through the clutter are all standard but important."

Case in point: the Obama '08 identity ad campaign. "It used all the right stuff," says Busse. "Simplicity, striking colours, meaningful visual language." He points to the logo's prominent "O," which evokes a rising sun, a new day and a new hope, and to its patriotic red, white and blue. Originally created by Chicago-based Sender LLC, the design has proven so effective that it's been used again and again, with subtle variations, to represent programs for various groups under Obama's presidency (Latinos, students, women, etc.).

### Emotion

Visual campaigns that cause emotional reactions yield better results because they're more memorable. This is why so many ads employ images of babies, animals, and models and actors made up to look destitute.

Check out the bold series that Industrial designed for Bikram's Yoga. "All manner of people practise Bikram's," blogs Busse about the campaign on his firm's website. The subjects in the ads, he points out, look like ordinary people: "overweight, balding and nerdy." The approach, he says, supports the tagline "Yoga for everybody": "These people aren't models, but they are indeed 'hot,' and so can you be, too, if you try Bikram's Yoga for yourself."



**HOT**  
Bikram's Yoga. For everybody.  
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Bikram's Yoga. For everybody.  
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The tagline and non-model subjects in the Bikram's ad campaign convey that anyone can do yoga



The ad campaign for Amacon's District South Main development evoked the site's history and the area's culture

Puzzle pieces suggest MaxHire's integration of marketing, recruiting, sales and research: a revolutionary way to manage candidates and jobs



**Authenticity**

"Tell the story, tell the truth and tell it to 'em straight," says Busse. Take Industrial's recent District South Main campaign for real-estate developer Amacon. Clear, concise imagery showing people and places authentic to the building's location at East 7th Avenue and Main Street put



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Banner Stands



Pop-up Displays



Eco-board/Bamboo Display

truth and meaning behind the design.

"Amacon wanted to stray away from the same-same, me-too approach this city has been overrun with," Busse explains. The company asked Industrial to help it "break free and capture the essence of the neighbourhood."

The design scheme evoked the culture of the area by representing the residents' day-to-day lives and actions.

"Most importantly, we had to be genuine," Busse recalls. "We geared up with our cameras and set out to capture the people, places and things that make Main Street – well – Main Street. We did this several times throughout the project, and many of these images have been used throughout the materials."

It worked. In a market still recovering from the economic downturn, the project sold 94 per cent on opening day, with the balance sold within a week, leading the way for the developer to commence construction of the planned second building much earlier than expected.

It boils down to impact: "To stand out in an ad-saturated market," says Busse, "your design needs to be a very bright light." ■

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